

Brazil top final Sprint Soccer Poll

KANSAS CITY, Mo. July 19 (AP) — The results of the final 1994 Sprint Soccer Poll, a weekly ranking of the top 10 national soccer teams as determined by a panel of 51 international soccer journalists, through Monday, July 18. The rankings are based on a 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 system, with first place teams receiving 10 points, second place receiving 9, etc. First place votes are in parentheses:

1. Brazil (51), 510 points.
2. Italy, 459
3. Netherlands, 404
4. Germany, 307
5. Sweden, 258
6. Bulgaria, 188
7. Romania, 139
8. Belgium, 84
9. Nigeria, 34

Abahani take on Brothers today

Sports Reporter
Defending champions Brothers Union take on Abahani Krira Chakra in the first semifinal of the Beximco 12th Federation Cup football tournament at the Dhaka Stadium today.

The match kicks off at 5.30 pm.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will cover the match live.

Abahani, winners of the Chams Cup in Calcutta this year and the DMFA Cup, the curtain-raising tournament of this season, are looking for a third with two Iraqi recruits Nazir Ali Hossain and Zahir Mehdi Ali and kicking.

Brothers Union, who finished runners-up to Abahani in the DMFA Cup, will rely on their local resources to defend the only title in their club history.

Tickets for the galleries have been fixed at Taka 25 for both the semifinals.

The tickets will be on sale at the counters of the Dhaka Stadium from 2.30 pm.

Two more Russians for Mohammedans

Sports Reporter

Inataev Gearman and Brezadze Vitali, both from Russia, signed for Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) office yesterday, completing Mohammedans' quota of four foreign recruits for this season.

However, although Mohammedans have four foreigners on paper, they will have to do with three as one of the two earlier signings — Mikhail Karataev — was sent home after lackluster performances in the recently concluded DMFA Cup.

That means Inataev and Vitali along with Andre Kazakov, in the city since he arrived with Karataev early this year, will have to galvanize the Mohammedan attack, weakened by the players' revolt at the onset of the inter-club players' transfer which left the defending league champions robbed of a number of key booters.

Coca-Cola teams up with AFC

The Coca-Cola Company has signed a four-year sponsorship agreement with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) as part of an unprecedented undertaking for the long-term continued development of football in Asia.

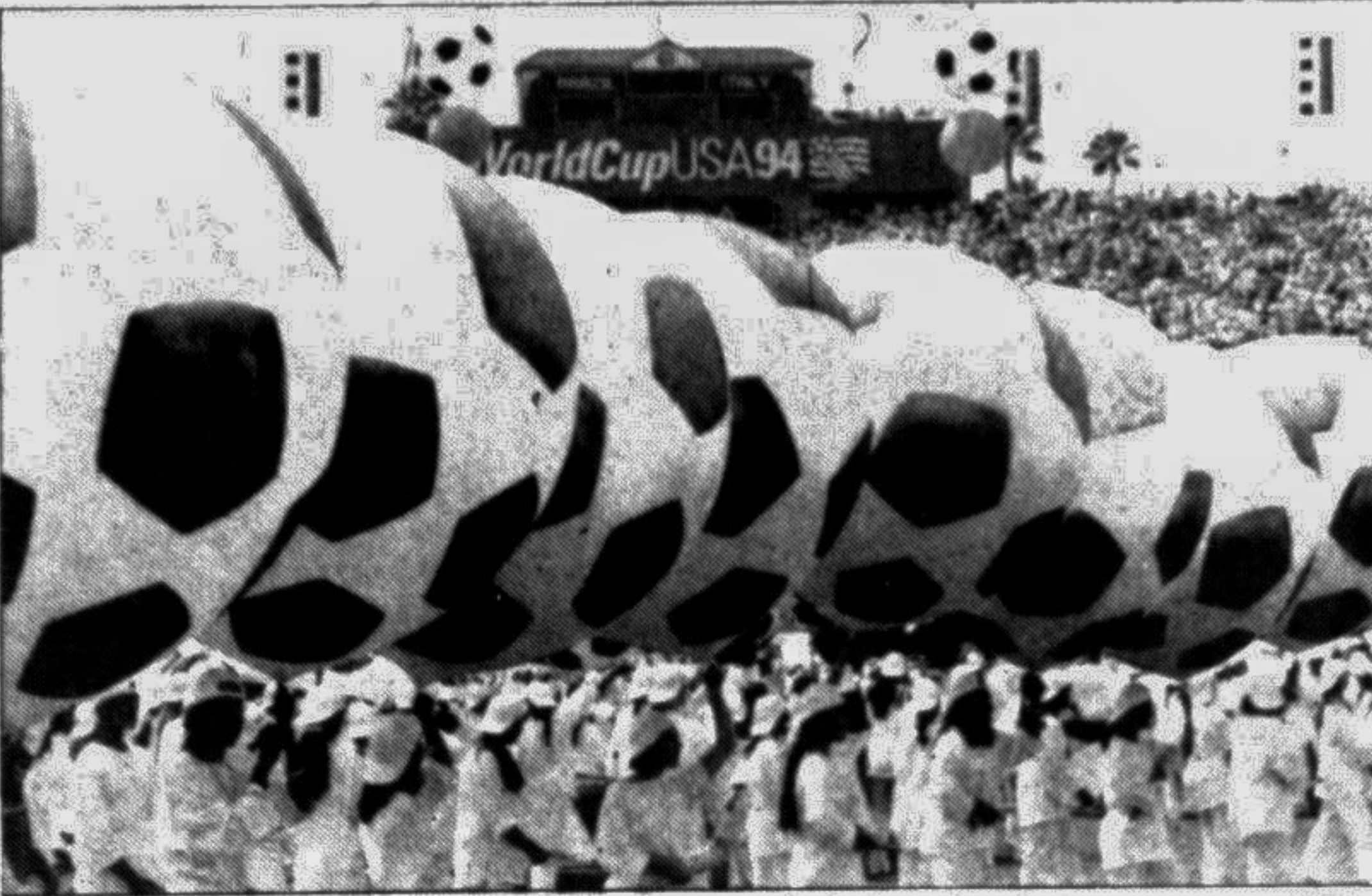
The agreement covers World Cup and Olympic Asian final qualifying rounds, Asian Cup, Asian Club championships, Asian Cup-winners Cup, Asian under-16 and under-19 youth championships, Asian women's championship, and Afro-Asian club and Nations Cup tournaments.



The Coca-Cola Company has been a strong partner of FIFA for many years, and has been involved with youth development activities in Asia for nearly 20 years. We are, therefore, very pleased to formalise this sponsorship with them," said Mr. Velappan.

Announcing the sponsorship agreement in Bangladesh, Khalid Raja business development manager (Bangladesh), said that the official tie-up with the AFC complements the Coca-Cola organisation's existing worldwide association with FIFA.

The FIFA/Coca-Cola World youth championship sponsorship began in 1975 and currently extends to the year 2001. In addition, the Coca-Cola Company also sponsors the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Football Development Programme, which includes International Academies future seminars, and Coca-Cola go for Goal youth training.



Giant soccer balloons are carried across the pitch during the closing ceremony of the World Cup at the Pasadena Rose Bowl on July 17 just before the start of the Brazil-Italy final.

Something for everyone

LOS ANGELES, July 19: Whether it was Diego Maradona's drugs ban, Roberto Baggio's last minute Finidi George's goals, or Russia's Oleg Salenko pulled out the stops against Cameroon to score a record five goals in one World Cup match when they won 6-1 in their group. But that was not enough to qualify following losses to Brazil and Sweden.

Saudi Arabia took over Cameroon's pioneering mantle from the last World Cup. Cameroon moved through to the quarter-finals in 1990 to become the first African nation ever to go that far. This time, the Saudis became the first Asian nation to make the second round of the World Cup since North Korea managed it in 1966.

And striker Saeed Owairan's fifth minute solo goal, eventually enough to beat Belgium and qualify from Group F, was Maradona-like in its quality.

Owairan began the move inside his own half, beat four opponents before shooting past the advancing Michel Preud'homme from 12 metres. It was the first goal the Belgian goalkeeper had conceded.

Roberto Baggio's goals under extreme pressure finally closed the debate on whether he can produce his genius when it matters.

In the second round, Nigeria were only two minutes away from an historic win when the world and European player of 1993 struck.

And 10 minutes into extra time, Baggio lobbed a ball into the path of Antonio Benarrivo, who was knocked down by

Augustine Eguavoen. Baggio strode up and hit the spot kick home off the post.

Baggio scored the best goal of the 1990 tournament against Czechoslovakia, and his goal against Spain in the quarter-final was similarly magical.

At 1-1 in the 87th minute, Giuseppe Signori hooked the ball into Baggio's path Baggio rounded keeper Andoni Zubizarreta and shot home from an acute angle as Spanish defender Abelardo desperately tried to block at the near post.

Two goals midway through the first half against Bulgaria in a 2-1 semifinal victory further increased the stature of this Juventus star.

Giantkiller Bulgaria carried on the shocks at the finals following their dramatic qualification last November when Emil Kostadinov scored with 10 seconds remaining against France to knock out the 1982 and 1986 semifinalists.

In the knockout stages, wins over Argentina and Germany, which included a stunning freekick from Hristo Stoichkov, earned them a semifinal spot.

On the down side, Maradona was banned after testing positive in a drugs test, Brazilian Leonardo was suspended for four matches for elbowing American Tab Ramos in the left temple, and FIFA slapped a massive eight-match ban on Italian Mauro Tassotti after he broke Spaniard Luis Enrique's nose.

On a lighter note, the prize for trying to make the most of a bad situation must go to Mexican keeper Jorge Campos. In the second round against Bulgaria, the back of the goal collapse and Campos urged the referee to keep the game going while a microphone stand held up one side of the net.

However, the ref wouldn't agree and the goal was eventually replaced.

And footballers were still going down like flies in near death throes after being fouled, despite FIFA guidelines to caution a player feigning injury. And there were many times when a player was carried off on a stretcher for treatment, only to run around like a deer a few minutes later.

As for "worsts" at the World Cup, Greece, who conceded 10 goals and scored none in defeats by Argentina, Bulgaria and Nigeria must take the prize.

Had they nabbed some third generation Greeks off the streets of America, they may not have done worse.

The prize for worst hats went to Moroccan fans who wore silly cardboard fez's, but celebrations in the worst taste were undoubtedly performed by the Saudi Arabians.

Far from being paranoid of the press, Saudi players kissed their nation's journalists as they revelled in the happiness of victory.

However, the prize for the most bizarre celebration of a goal must go to Nigeria's Finidi George, who heralded his strike against Greece by barking like a dog.

So much for the cartwheel of Colombian Harold Lozano, Roger Milla's hip wiggle, or even Diego Maradona's crazed stare as he ran straight into television cameras in ecstasy to herald a score.

And, after his teammates converged round George, perhaps to pat his head and say good boy, he cocked up his right leg in true doggy fashion. "We do that all the time," said teammate Sunday Oliseh, who added Nigerian party goers regularly behaved like our canine friends.

Brazilians yearn for more

FULLERTON, Calif. July 19 (AP) — They came, they saw, they conquered the World Cup. It was almost enough to satisfy Brazilians.

Most. Their country is the world's only four-time Cup winner, and the drought of 24 years without a title is over. And Brazilians celebrated wildly from the Amazon to the southern pampas.

But if fans were overjoyed with the win, they were underwhelmed at how it was achieved.

Brazil did it with a steel defence and a dogged, scrappy style that wore down their opponents. Offence was almost an afterthought: In four of their seven games, Brazil scored one goal or none.

That was evident to the estimated 2 billion people worldwide who watched Brazil battle Italy to a 0-0 tie for 120 minutes in Sunday's final at the Rose Bowl. Brazil finally won it 3-2 in a shootout.

Sure, it was efficient. But Brazilians expect more — they want artistry, magic, elegance, showtime. And there was precious little of that in this World Cup.

There were flashes, to be sure. Romario's runs up the middle, snaking through defenders, the ball glued to his foot. Or Bebeto's hip-fake on US defender Alex Lalas to find a gap for his winning shot and his dancing breakaway for a score against the Netherlands.

Even their opponents were impressed.

"They're awesome," said Lalas. "They're dribbling maniacs. They come at you at 100 miles (160 kms) an hour."

But for many they were merely moments, a tantalising taste of what might have been. Brazilians have higher standards for themselves. After all, they gave the world Pele.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira says his critics are living in the past.

"The era of magic and dreams is over," he said.

"Brazil has the best soccer in the world, but technique has to have tactical organisation, too."

His main concern was to keep Brazil from repeating mistakes made in Cups of 1982, 1986 and 1990, when a favoured Brazilian team was knocked out before the finals.

Parreira feels he has introduced Brazil to "modern" soccer.

He says that means running both ends of the field, playing without the ball, in a word, balance.

"I did it my way," he said. "And I did it to the end, without changes, without giving in."

Brazil's adversaries also made it hard for the team to show its stuff. With the exception of the Dutch, they cowered and waited for Brazil to make a mistake.

WORLD CUP NOTEBOOK

PASADENA, Calif. July 19 (AP) — Brazil's World Cup victory won't show up in the official record.

The championship victory over Italy Sunday came in a shootout, and that means that the final standings show Brazil and Italy tied in the last game.

Brazil finished with a record of five victories, two ties and no losses, the only unbeaten team in the tournament, according to statistics released by FIFA, soccer's governing body.

Italy were second on the official list, at 4-2-1.

Tiebreaker shootouts don't count as a victory or loss in the standings, and goals scored in the penalty shots don't count for an individual's tournament total. That means that — despite getting a goal in the shootout — Brazil's Romario finished with five goals, one less than World Cup leaders Oleg Salenko of Russia and Hristo Stoichkov of Bulgaria.

THE RECORD KEEPS GROWING

The crowd of 94,194 at the Rose Bowl on Sunday swelled the World Cup record attendance for the first US edition to more than a million above the previous mark.

The total for World Cup USA was 3,567,415, compared with the previous record of 2,517,348 set in Italy four years ago.

Average attendance for the 52 games was 68,604.

The crowd for Sunday's championship match was the largest for the tournament, surpassing the 93,194 who watched the United States defeat Colombia in the first round at the Rose Bowl.

NEWS FROM THE JOB FRONT

When the final whistle blew Sunday to end the World Cup, thousands of staff employees for the US organising committee suddenly found themselves out of work or facing their final days on the payroll.

Most had resumes at the ready and were networking like mad to come up with new jobs. A few of the luckier ones had their next stop already booked.

Among the luckiest was one of the top officials of World Cup USA '94, managing director Scott Parks LeTallier.

He and Dick Kazmaier announced Sunday that they are starting a special-event promotion company called Eagle Sports Group. It will focus on big sports events, such as the next two World Cups and the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

And there was good news for some of LeTallier's colleagues. The new company, a press release said, "will include many employees of the highly successful World Cup USA 1994 Organising Committee."

No tears only jeers

ROME, July 19: Italy's soccer coach Arrigo Sacchi flew home to jeers from disgruntled fans on Tuesday when he returned with the team after their defeat to Brazil in the World Cup final, reports Reuters.

About 1,000 supporters, some with tears in their eyes, gathered at Rome's Fiumicino Airport to see the squad return from Los Angeles where they went down to the Brazilians 3-2 on penalties on Sunday.

The players, many of them looking dejected, received a warm welcome but a group of fans waving banners of Italian club Lazio and chanting "Signori!" heckled Sacchi.

In a controversial decision, Sacchi did not play Lazio striker and league top scorer Giuseppe Signori in the final.

They're ignorant and I've had it up here to you ignorant people," Sacchi told reporters.

Star striker Roberto Baggio, whose missed penalty kick sealed Italy's defeat in the first World Cup decided on a penalty shoot-out, was one of the few players with a smile as he descended from the aircraft.

He blew kisses to the crowd before police escorted him to a mini-van which carried him off to a reunion with friends and relatives.

Midfielder Antonio Benarrivo put a brave face on defeat saying Italy had proven itself "the second best team in the world."

"I can't believe all these people have come to thank us," Benarrivo said as he paraded with teammates in front of screaming fans after the 12-hour flight from Los Angeles.

Several players, including midfielders Dino Baggio and Roberto Donadoni and forward Gianfranco Zola, still seemed in shock over Italy's loss.

Donadoni, who frowned most of the time and hung his head low said some fans were ungrateful.

"We could have been spared some of these remarks," he said, referring to criticism of Sacchi's choice not to play Signori.

Signori, the Italian league's top scorer for the past two seasons, was bubbly over the turnout. "It makes me very happy to see all these people here," he said.

Zola, whose World Cup lasted about 10 minutes after he was sent off in the last 16 against Nigeria, walked away from the squad, his head down.

A fan favourite, the diminutive Sardinian had been eligible to play in the final but, like Signori, was relegated to the bench by Sacchi.

Players in the 22-strong squad were taking a two-week vacation before rejoining their clubs to prepare for the new season, which starts in the first week of September.

Bangladesh U-19 cricketers leave on July 25

Sports Reporter

An 18-member under-19 Bangladesh cricket team leaves Dhaka on July 25 for the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur to participate in an international youth cricket tournament, scheduled to be held from July 28 to August 8.

Bangladesh begin their campaign against Papua New Guinea on July 30, the third day of the seven-nation meet. The participants of the tournament, originally designed to be an eight-term affair, were reduced to seven after the United Arab Emirates pulled out.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) has picked 15 players for the upcoming meet and is expected to name the three officials today.

Following is the tournament schedule for the Bangladesh squad:

- July 30: vs Papua New Guinea
- 31: vs Hong Kong
- August 3: vs Malaysia
- 4: vs Denmark
- 5: vs Sri Lanka
- 6: vs East and Central Africa

Nat'l b'ball from tomorrow

The Pepsi 17th national basketball championship begins at the wooden-floor gymnasium tomorrow, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman will inaugurate the eight-day competition in the afternoon.

Eleven teams, divided into two groups, will participate in the meet organised by the Bangladesh Amateur Basketball Federation.

The teams are: Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force, Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh Police, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Barisal, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur and Jessore DSAs.

Sacchi, sad but satisfied

PASADENA, July 19: Beaten World Cup finalists Italy packed their bags for the long flight home on Monday reflecting on what might have been, reports Reuters.

"We emerged from hell and came within touching distance of paradise," coach Arrigo Sacchi said of Italy's painful progress from opening game defeat to the runners-up spot.

It took the first penalty shoot-out in a World Cup final to decide Sunday's showdown with Brazil after a scoreless 120 minutes but Sacchi was honest enough to admit the better team won.

"We have made enormous progress but Brazil at the moment have just that little bit extra," the coach told a news conference on Monday.

Sacchi gambled in the final by fielding ace attacker Roberto Baggio despite a hamstring strain and recalling veteran captain Franco Baresi just three weeks after knee surgery.

"Soccer is made up of so many factors and is about people. It seemed to me impossible not to pick Baggio and Baresi if they said they thought they could make it. They've been two of the most important players over the past three years," he said.

Baresi, who is now quitting international soccer, had an outstanding game in defence while Baggio was clearly not at his best. Ironically, both stars missed in the penalty shoot out, along with Daniele

Massaro. Sacchi has a contract until the 1996 European Championships and intends to honour it. Italy begin their qualification matches for that tournament, which they failed to make in 1992, against



ARRIGO SACCHI

Slovenia in September.

He identified a lack of creativity in midfield as one of the main failings of his team.

"Our midfield suffered when put under pressure. We were unable to launch attacks as we would have liked," he said.

Sacchi came in for some savage criticism for changing his tactics and team during the finals and that has clearly left its mark.

"I found myself in a strange situation because the support I have always enjoyed from the press was reduced to a minimum and the public also lost a little faith," he said.

Sacchi coached an AC Milan

team featuring brilliant Dutchmen Ruud Gullit and Marco van Basten to Italian league and European Cup triumphs and was hired three years ago to bring Milan's spectacular soccer to the national team.

Little of that thrilling style has been seen but the professionalism and spirit which lift European Champions Milan out of the ordinary has been evident in this tournament.

Beaten by Ireland in their opening match, Italy came through to beat Norway with just 10 men in the next.

"That could have been the end for us but everyone pulled together at the vital time," said Sacchi.

The Italian coach said the heat and humidity of the United States had made it impossible for Italy to play its hard-running game to full potential.

But he judged the tournament, which has drawn record crowds, a great success.

My fear is for future tournaments where there will be matches played in front of just 10,000 or 20,000 and that will look bad in comparison with here," he said.

He said deciding a final with penalties was an unsatisfactory conclusion.

"From a technical viewpoint, another match in three days would have been better," he said to groans from weary reporters.

But overall he pronounced himself satisfied.

If you asked me to repeat this experience I would sign up for it a 1,000 times over."

A long night for revellers

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 19: The World Cup may be over, but Brazil's party carried on in high gear Monday, report agencies.

Some Brazilians struggled back to work after a night of dancing and Carnival-like merrymaking following their country's 3-2 victory over Italy on Sunday.

But for many die-hard soccer fans, Brazil's first World Cup win in 24 years was a good excuse to keep on celebrating.

Rio's financial district was almost deserted. Only the street cleaners were busy, shoveling mounds of beer cups and confetti from downtown boulevards and beachside avenues.

Along Copacabana beach, bands of youths wrapped in Brazilian flags cruised up and down the strip in pickup trucks and convertible cars, honking horns and screaming "Four-Time Champion!"

Street children tied ribbons in the yellow and green colors of Brazil's flags to tree branches in city parks, and sunbathers flocked to Ipanema beach wearing green-and-yellow bikinis, bandanas and swimming shorts.

As the sun rose over famed Guanabara Bay, rock climbers scaled the face of Sugar Loaf Mountain and nailed a green-and-yellow flag to the face of the granite mountain.

Most banks, schools, post offices and stores remained shuttered well past noon.

President Itamar Franco declared a half-day holiday for government workers, but none could be seen heading to work, even late Monday afternoon.

Carlos Andre Villela, an army lieutenant, said he was taking the day off.

"I'm calling in sick. This is a very special day, a day of a lifetime," he said.

Those who woke early gathered at newspaper stands to read the gigantic sports headlines or went to church to offer thanks for the victory — and to confess to the excesses committed during the celebrations.

Block-long lines formed outside the emergency ward of one of the city's main hospitals, the Souza Aguiar Hospital. Doctors said most of the patients were revelers who suffered burns from fireworks.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil's biggest city and financial nerve center, some people went to work wearing team shirts with the name of their favourite player stitched on the back.

In Recife, capital of Pernambuco state on Brazil's northeast coast, officials prepared for the team's arrival Tuesday morning for the first of four ticker-tape parades.

The players will then fly to the capital, Brasilia, where the president will present each one with the Merit of Honour, the country's highest award, and then on to Rio.

In Recife, thousands formed a human chain along Boa Viagem beach draped in Brazilian flags and wearing

green-and-yellow wigs, body paint, glitter and lipstick.

"The party's not over yet. It's just beginning," said Conceicao Monteiro da Silva, a high school student.

Brazil beat Italy 3-2 in a shoot-out of penalty kicks after an overtime game. The victory was particularly satisfying to a country reeling under 45 per cent monthly inflation, corruption scandals and growing urban violence, and where soccer is practically a state religion.

The Brazilian people who suffered so many social injustices deserve this victory as a tribute to their happiness," Brazilian soccer icon Pele said Sunday.

Brazil has been grappling with poverty and resurgent inflation, running at 50 per cent a month in June, and severe frosts that may have wiped out up to half of next year's coffee crop.

Euphoria over the victory also helped wipe away the lingering national sorrow over the death of motor racing idol Ayrton Senna in May.

"The self-esteem felt by the players must be transferred to Brazil itself," President Itamar Franco said.

"Obviously, soccer doesn't solve the nation's problems, but it's our passion, something that's in our blood from birth," enthused one television commentator. "We love football and we're the best in the world."

In a national where sports idols are more popular than many others in society, including leading politicians, the World Cup win was expected to buoy Brazil's volatile economic markets as October elections approach.

Analysts predicted the coincidence of the World Cup win with a government anti-inflation plan should boost the standing of former economy minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a pro-business candidate, in the election, where he is chasing left-wing front-runner Luiz Inacio "Lula" Da Silva.

The fact that Brazil had failed to win a World Cup since 1970, when they beat Italy 4-1 in Mexico to become three-time champions, made the victory all the sweeter.

"Thank God, we made it. Can you imagine what Brazil would be like if we hadn't won this title?" said one fan in Rio de Janeiro.

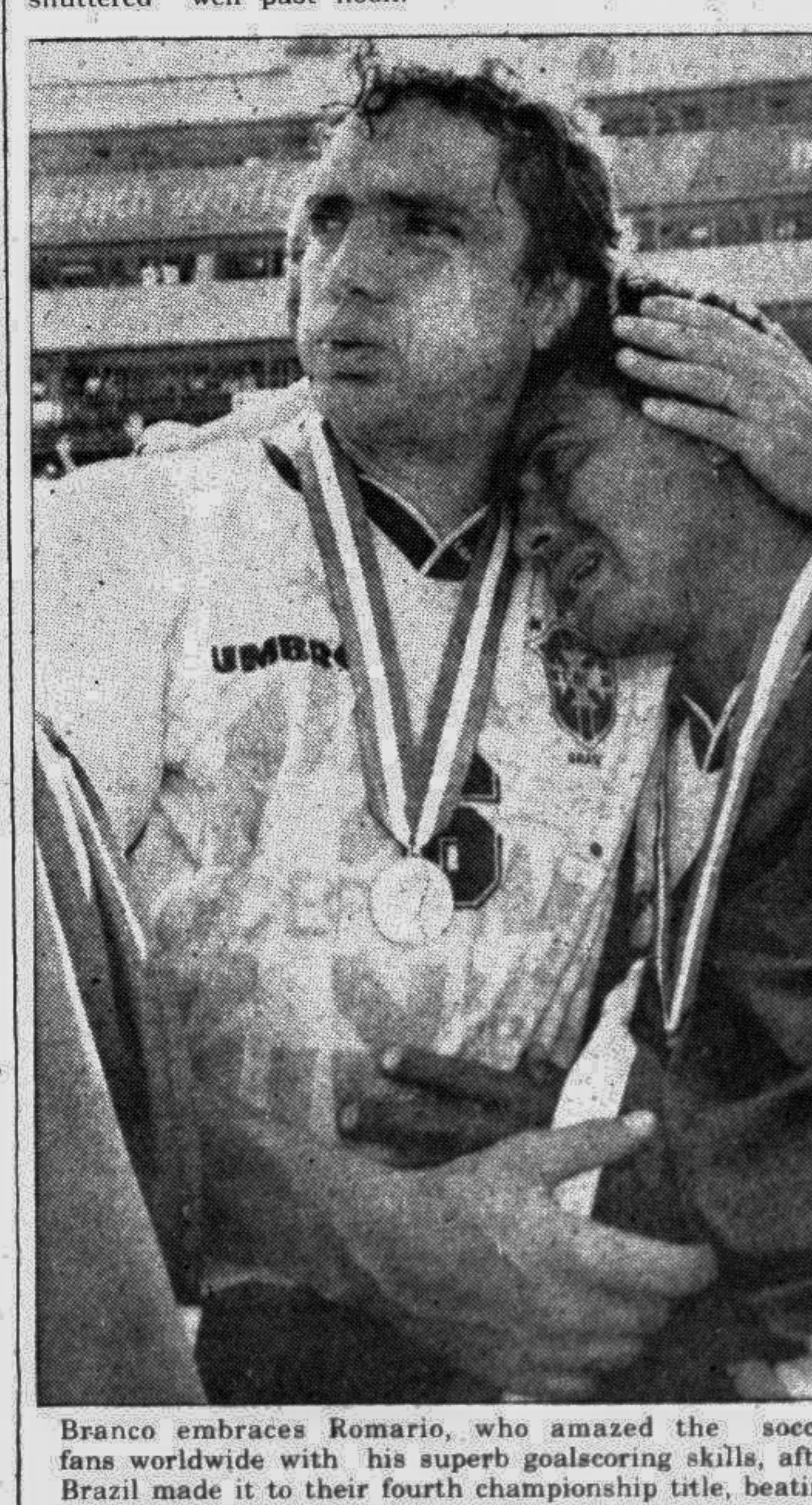
Buchwald in Japan

FUKUOKA, Japan, July 19: German international Guido Buchwald arrived in Japan Monday to join the Urawa Red Diamonds, currently residing in last place in the Japanese football league J-League, reports AFP.

The 33-year-old former Stuttgart defender, a member of Germany's 1990 World Cup winning squad in Italy, also played three games in the United States, where the defending champions crashed to a surprising defeat to Bulgaria in the quarter-finals.

"Before my new challenge in Japan, I had hoped I would be able to gain a good result in my last play for Germany. I was disappointed I couldn't," said Buchwald, who has played 76 games for the national team.

The duration of Buchwald's contract is 18 months until January 1996.



Brancos embraces Romario, who amazed the soccer fans worldwide with his superb goalscoring skills, after Brazil made it to their fourth championship title, beating Italy 3-2 in tie-breaker at the Pasadena Rose Bowl on July 17.

— AFP photo